'NO REGRETS' SAYS ASSASSIN RAY

By GLOBE REPORTER

ONE year after marrying convicted assassin James Earl Ray, his wife Anna has no regrets... even though he may never be released from prison.

"I will always love him," she told *The Globe* in an exclusive interview this week.

"I know that he is innocent and that someday we will be together.

"I have no regrets about marrying him — none at all."

Anna, 33, married Ray on October 13, 1978 at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee, where he is serving a 99-year sentence for killing Dr. Martin Luther King.

Mrs. Ray met her husband during a court appearance last year. He was appealing his sentence and as a freelance artist, she was in court to sketch him.

Although the couple have never consummated their marriage, Anna says that she visits her husband twice a week.

Hug

"We don't talk through glass or anything like that," she said.

"They let us sit at the same table and we are able to kiss and hug."

But that was before Ray made his third escape attempt from the maximum security prison in early November.

Mrs. Ray has not been allowed to visit her husband since he was thwarted by a prison guard who saw him crawling through the grass along the prison wall.

"I don't know what is going to happen now," Mrs. Ray said.

"I know it is terribly frustrating for him, knowing that he is innocent and that no one will believe him.

"I know he needs me very much — and I need him."

All Mrs. Ray can do now is look forward to the day when the state might allow her conjugal visits with her husband.

"There is nothing wrong with love," she said. "It can make people think and make them want to change their past ways."

In the meantime, the pretty blonde said she speaks to everyone she can about getting her husband a new trial.

"It will be a long hard road," she said of her attempt to free her husband.

"But I didn't expect anything to be easy. Maybe someday the real killer or killers will come forward — or maybe the police will find him, or them.

"Until then, I will do whatever I can."

But despite her brave face, life for Mrs. Ray is not easy.

She carries on an anonymous existence, living in a weather-beaten house, with an unlisted phone number, in West Knoxville.

"Not having my husband with me has been tough," she admitted.

"I knew it would be for a while... but I am an artist. I don't mind being alone. I need time alone."

And she said, although a few people may have bought her paintings because she is the wife of James Earl Ray, "everybody knows that I didn't marry him for the money."

"I don't ever intend to divorce him. And, one day, I would love to have some children."

But the fact that her name brings stares from people still hurts her sometimes.

"People look at me as if they are afraid to ask questions," she said.

"A lot of people just don't understand."

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THE WIFE OF

TOUGH... Mrs. Anna Ray will never divorce.

CONVICTED... James Earl Ray serves 99 years.